

Senator Haskell, Representative Elliott, and distinguished members of the committee:

Good morning. I hope you all are doing well. My name is Sophie Baum, and I attended high school in Woodbridge, Connecticut; I am a constituent of Jorge Cabrera and Mary Welanders. I am testifying in favor of House Bill 6374, An Act Concerning Sexual Misconduct on College Campuses. Although I do not attend college in Connecticut, campus sexual violence on my campus and every other campus across the nation must be addressed. Today, I urge you to take one step to respond to this sexual violence epidemic.

I am fortunate not to have ever been a victim of sexual violence, but many of my friends and peers cannot say the same. For women, walking home at night or going to a party with a few friends is an inherently nerve-racking and vulnerable situation. This is why the passage of HB 6374 is so imperative.

This bill advocates for a biennial campus climate survey, which gives students an outlet to confidentially share their experiences. A climate survey distribution every four years is not sufficient, as it excludes students in programs shorter than four years in length from submitting and also prevents students from addressing ongoing concerns. The bill also includes an amnesty policy requirement, which allows students to report incidents of sexual violence without fear of penalization for drug or alcohol use. Both of these provisions will undoubtedly have monumental impacts for students and survivors across Connecticut. Once our state passes HB 6374, our actions will encourage other states to do the same, thus paving the way for nationwide action to address this ongoing epidemic.

Thank you so much for listening and for considering this bill. Members of the Higher Educational Committee, for the past, present, and future students of our state, please pass this bill favorably out of committee, and join me in working to end sexual violence, one college campus at a time.

Best,
Sophie Baum